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Perestroika, Glasnost and Soviet Foreign Policy

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Perestroika and *glasnost* have brought to the surface features of Soviet political culture which have been suppressed for decades. Exploding into the open are ethnic, group, class and national interests which previously could scarcely have been credited with influencing the course of domestic politics, much less foreign policy.¹

In the new atmosphere, Lenin's maxim that foreign policy is the extension of domestic politics has to be seen in a new light. For the first time since the 1920s, it is almost indisputable that foreign policy has the potential for being decisively influenced by events, groups and pressures which are formed beyond the walls of the Kremlin.

If *glasnost* has created the environment for numerous societal tendencies to come to the fore, it has been *perestroika* which has begun to aggregate these tendencies into new channels for foreign policy formulation. *Perestroika* has given rise to new political institutions, such as the Congress of Peoples' Deputies and its two upper houses in the Supreme Soviet, which promise to provide an institutional form to those societal groups hoping to effect Soviet foreign policy.

Perestroika involves not just the restructuring of institutions, however important that may be, but also the far more difficult and fundamental realignment of national psychology. In external relations, Gorbachev seeks to move the USSR from isolation to interdependence. He aims to do this by bringing the USSR as a state into the world while at the same time bringing the world into the USSR. By so doing he hopes to broaden the impact of traditional political cultures on foreign policy, and he strives to eliminate old insular barriers and shape new realities. *Perestroika*, therefore, is not only having

an impact on foreign policy; Gorbachev is using foreign policy as an instrument to advance *perestroika*.

This symbiotic link in Gorbachev's vision between Soviet foreign policy and domestic politics is both laden with opportunities and fraught with dangers. Gorbachev faces the dilemma that, although responsible for unleashing many of these societal forces, he receives no advance assurance that the new views and new institutions which emerge will promote foreign policies in line with his own thinking. Thus, for example, the opportunity to construct a foreign policy based on national consensus rests uneasily alongside the danger of fifteen republics all vying to exercise their constitutional right to sign foreign treaties. Further, the opportunity to build Europe as a common home coexists reluctantly with the danger that such a policy could increase the movement toward independence in the Baltic states and simultaneously create a backlash by Russian nationalists.

The outcome is uncertain; the process is dynamic and seemingly unstoppable. Undoubtedly Gorbachev has touched off a wide and contentious debate which goes to the core of the Soviet political system, and includes fundamental questions about who sets the foreign policy priorities of the USSR. At issue is not only the question of which central institutions will be crucial to the formulation of foreign policy, but also what is the foreign policy authority and maneuverability of the republics.

Beyond this, a debate has begun on the nature of foreign commitments, sparking as it has questions about the whole relationship between the USSR and its allies in Eastern Europe and the Third World. This is linked to the issue of the role of

¹ The author wishes to acknowledge Bruce Parrott, Ya'acov Roi, and Jack Snyder for their useful comments in the redrafting of the article; Jonathan Valdez for his editorial assistance; and the United States Institute of Peace for support for a project on New Thinking and the Soviet Approach to Regional Conflicts, of which this piece is a part. The opinions, findings, conclusions and recommendations expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Institute of Peace. The author also wishes to thank Nodari Simonia, Deputy Director of IMEMO, for his invitation to visit Moscow in summer 1989, for his assistance while there, and for his comments on this piece. The views reflected here, however, are my own.



Soviet military presence abroad, including both the cost and the legitimacy of this role. And finally, of the many issues on the foreign policy agenda, none has spawned as much debate as the effort to open up to the West, which in turn has sparked arguments reminiscent of those between nineteenth century Slavophiles and Westernizers.

The consequences of all these debates are enormous. Gorbachev's own political future is bound up in his success at delivering the kind of radical restructuring of domestic and foreign policy envisaged in his many statements. It is also dependent upon his ability to convince his conservative detractors that opening up Soviet society will produce growth and transformation, not subversion and decay. His success will determine the societal landscape of the USSR into the twenty-first century, and as such will also have enormous implications for the strength and aspirations of the USSR as a partner and adversary for the West.

Who Sets Foreign Policy Priorities? The Role of the Central Institutions

As long as Soviet foreign policy was deemed to be both scientific and class based, it was the leadership of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), acting as the vanguard of the ruling proletarian class, which accorded itself the right to set the general line of the state's foreign policy. Disagreement with this dictum by either individuals or groups produced both ideological censure and repression. After all, it was argued, foreign policy was an instrument for the construction of a future communist society; it was not in all cases meant to take into account the desires or interests of the current population.

Since Gorbachev came to power, however, there has been a move to 'de-ideologize' foreign policy. The new theory maintains that while Marxism-Leninism would still shape efforts to construct socialism domestically, in the realm of intergovernmental relations ideology would be subordinated to the higher values of the protection of humankind. The stabilization of the international system has replaced its destruction as a primary stated objective of Soviet foreign policy.

These views were enunciated initially by Gorbachev and the foreign policy elite within the CPSU Central Committee and the Foreign Ministry. However, under the influence of *perestroika* and *glasnost*, the monopoly of this group has been challenged. It was clear that as long as foreign policy was based on class values, the preeminence of the CPSU was unassailable. But as declaratory policy came to be based more on universal human values, and less on class values, the question naturally arose: why should the exclusivity of the

CPSU in setting the foreign policy goals of the nation not be contested?

This process has occurred at the very time when Soviet public opinion polls have shown that the legitimacy of the CPSU Central Committee *apparatus* is extremely low compared with other groups. A poll conducted by the USSR Congress of Peoples' Deputies' Sociological Service in May 1989 revealed that when asked what level of confidence people had in various institutions to improve the state of affairs in the country, only thirty percent expressed full confidence in the Central Committee *apparatus*, compared with sixty-eight percent for the Congress of Peoples' Deputies, and fifty-nine percent for the CPSU General Secretary (Gorbachev).² The Politburo and Central Committee plenums also ranked low, with thirty-two percent each, thus indicating that except for the position occupied by Gorbachev himself, the institution of the Party as a whole is widely perceived as ineffectual in solving the country's problems, including those in the realm of foreign policy.

This gradual shift away from the Party *apparatus* as the focus for the formulation of foreign policy has resulted not only from the decline of its popular authority, but also from the frontal assaults on it by Gorbachev and other leading reformers. The size of the *apparatus* has been reduced and the two departments previously responsible for formulating (and in some areas implementing) Soviet foreign policy have been amalgamated. The revamped International Department is now divided into two sections, one for capitalist countries and one for socialist countries. Still, the department as a whole has remained understaffed, since most of the reform-minded personnel who were offered positions turned them down, a further indication of the drop in CPSU credibility. Thus, for example, fully a year after the new structure was established, no top-level appointments have been made in the crucial sectors for ideology or the Middle East, amongst others. Despite the protestations of the International Department's chief, Valentin Falin, that the department still maintains a capability to shape foreign policy, this ability is clearly diminished.³

As for the emerging role of the Congress of Peoples' Deputies and the Supreme Soviet, from the first meeting at the end of May 1989, it was clear that these bodies would seek to investigate past foreign policy decisions and to monitor and approve future behavior. In his report to the Congress, Gorbachev himself sought to strengthen the role of the Congress and the Supreme Soviet, laying the blame for the drop in the Soviet Union's international prestige during the 1970s on the "command-based system and the secretive decision-making that was characteristic of it." He proposed that future "foreign policy decisions should be adopted only after they have been thoroughly discussed in the Supreme Soviet and its commissions, while the most major ones, for instance those

² *Izvestiya*, May 25, 1989.

³ "Judge Yourself Critically," *Argumenty i Fakty*, No. 9, 4-5 March, 1989, p. 45.

connected with allied relations and the conclusions of the most important treaties, would be submitted for consideration by the Congress of Peoples' Deputies."⁴

The Congress of Peoples' Deputies and the two chambers of the Supreme Soviet, the Council of the Union and the Council of Nationalities, began fundamental debates about foreign policy issues. They utilized open and nationally televised sessions of both the Congress and the Supreme Soviet to air grievances and to demand changes. They also pressed the leadership, sometimes against resistance, to form commissions and committees which would be both representative and open in their proceedings. As a result, commissions (defined by the Soviets as organs subordinate to the Congress or to any one of the two chambers) were established to investigate both past responsibility for the 1979 decision to send troops into Afghanistan and the true circumstances surrounding the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact. Moreover, committees (defined as permanent organs created by the two chambers of the Supreme Soviet jointly, responsible to them equally, and consisting of membership drawn primarily from the two chambers but with some rotating membership from the Congress of Peoples' Deputies also allowed) on international affairs and on defense and national security were formed which would have the right to investigate all foreign and defense issues, including defense expenditure, the role and activities of the KGB, foreign aid, arms trade, and disarmament issues.

The election of Yevgeniy Primakov as chairman of the Council of the Union and of Georgiy Shakhnazarov as chairman of the international affairs committee ensured that the new line in foreign policy would be represented at the top echelons of these new bodies. Indicative, however, of the difficulty of creating institutions guaranteed to reflect new thinking is the committee for defense and national security questions. While formally capable of investigating the whole panoply of military-security issues, its chairman, V. Lapygin, and the majority of the committee is largely conservative, leading Moscow analysts to lament that it had been captured by the "military-industrial complex."

The Role of the Republics

The Congress and the Supreme Soviet fulfilled a particularly useful role by giving organized expression to the newly-found activism of republics in pushing for greater autonomy, even in the formulation of foreign policy. Republics were guaranteed the right under Article 80 of the USSR constitution

to sign treaties, exchange diplomatic missions, and join international organizations. Now republic leaders have come under popular pressure to pursue in practice what previously had been guaranteed only on paper. The prevailing mood was expressed by one deputy who maintained that "not only the Union as a whole, but each of the Union's peoples, has its own external interests, not only economically but also politically."⁵

The Baltic republics have engaged in foreign policy behavior most challenging to central authority. They published the secret codicils of the 1939 Nazi-Soviet Pact establishing spheres of influence in Eastern Europe and the Baltic Republics, and they demanded that the USSR denounce this "unlawful international legal document."⁶ Were the USSR finally to admit, formally, that incorporation of the Baltic republics and Eastern Europe into the Soviet orbit had been forcible, and the result of collusion with fascist Germany, the implication for the cohesion of both the Soviet Union and the Soviet bloc would be enormous. Many of the other demands of Baltic deputies would become much more plausible — for example to establish a union between the Baltic countries and Scandinavia, to be called 'Baltiscandia'; to oblige the Soviet army to renegotiate the stationing of troops on Baltic soil; and to enter the United Nations as a delegation with the same rights as the Ukraine and Byelorussia. All such actions would naturally flow from a change in the very basis of the union binding central authority to the republics.

Next to the demands of the Baltic republics, the proposals made by the Armenians appear modest. They have called on the USSR to denounce the 1921 treaty with Turkey in which (Armenian) Nakhichevan was ceded to Azerbaijan. They also have maintained that Armenia never renounced its claim to the restoration of the Kars region in Turkey, and Armenian leaders have called on the Soviet government to issue an official denunciation of Turkey for the 1915 massacre of Armenians.⁷ Such demands, if pursued vigorously, would have a destabilizing effect on Soviet-Turkish relations, which thus far have been little affected by the intense rivalries and clashes between Turkic minorities and Armenian, Azeri, or Georgian populations in the Caucasus and Central Asia.

Russian Nationalists Respond

Parallel with, and in response to, republics' demands for greater participation in the formulation of foreign policy has been a burgeoning of Russian nationalist activities. There exist both internationalist and xenophobic trends within

4 "Report by Mikhail Gorbachev to the Congress of Peoples' Deputies," Moscow Television Service in Russian, May 30, 1989, in Foreign Broadcast Information Service, *Daily Report: The Soviet Union*, FBIS-SOV-89-103S, May 31, 1989, p. 60 [henceforth identified by code only].

5 Deputy V.A. Ambartsumyan, President of the Armenian SSR Academy of Sciences, speaking at the Congress of Peoples' Deputies session, June 2, 1989, "Stenographic Report," *Izvestiya*, June 4, 1989.

6 Speech by Deputy Ya. Ya. Peters, Chairman of the Latvian Writers' Union Board, at the Congress of Peoples' Deputies, June 2, 1989, "Stenographic Report," *Izvestiya*, June 4, 1989.

7 See the speeches at the Congress of Peoples' Deputies by V.A. Ambartsumyan, President of the Armenian SSR Academy of Sciences, June 2, 1989, ("Stenographic Report," *Izvestiya*, June 4, 1989) and by Boris Vartanovich Dadamyan, a deputy from Nagorno-Karabakh, on June 6, 1989 (Moscow Television Service in Russian, June 6, 1989, FBIS-SOV-89-108S, June 7, 1989, p. 12).

The Harriman Institute Forum

contemporary Russian national thought, as well as both pro- and anti-imperial tendencies.

Gorbachev's desire to end Russia's isolation is supported by those Russian nationalist intellectuals who see themselves as internationalist and anti-imperial, insofar as they advocate the integration of Russia into the international system on the basis of equality with other states. They would promote Russian patriotism, while rejecting the chauvinistic and xenophobic overtones inherent in much of the Russian nationalist tradition. The respected Academician and Russian cultural historian Dmitriy Likhachev, who was named by Gorbachev to be head of the Soviet Cultural Foundation and who is a deputy to the Congress of Peoples' Deputies, made the distinction that "patriotism is the love of one's country, while nationalism is the hatred of other peoples."⁸ A paternalistic attitude toward other nations, including those inside and outside Soviet boundaries, however, also informs this strand of Russian nationalist thought: "The Russian people must never lose their moral authority among other peoples.... Only by being aware of our world responsibility can we, the Russians, preserve our position of leadership in our country."⁹

While elements of this wing of Russian nationalism have been coopted by Gorbachev, nevertheless there are certain of his policies with which even they object. In particular, they oppose his idea that the USSR should become part of a "common European home." If such a policy were to be pursued on the basis of equality and purely at the interstate level, that would be one thing, but they are concerned that a "common European home" signifies a re-orientation in Russian political culture. That this is precisely what Gorbachev and his supporters have in mind is indicated by their repeated references to Russia's historical debt to European ideals, as in the following statement by Vladimir Lukin, the deputy director of the Foreign Ministry's Planning and Assessments Department:

By Europe, we should understand not only the geopolitical phenomenon, but also a definite method as to how to live, think, communicate with other people.... The 'common European home' is the home of a civilization of which we have been on the periphery for a long time. The processes that are going on today in our country and in a number of socialist countries in Eastern Europe have besides everything else a similar historical dimension — the dimension of movement towards a return to Europe in the civilized meaning of the word.¹⁰

Another trend is still more chauvinistic and nationalistic in its approach, seeing Russia as having a rightful place of

preeminence in international affairs, either because of the supremacy of its Marxist-Leninist ideology or because of its historical legacy. Although there is much that divides these two sub-groups, they have in common a shared view of the intrinsic greatness of Russia, believing past errors to be the responsibility of imported ideas and non-Russian individuals or nations (especially Jews). This tendency opposes Gorbachev's restructuring of foreign policy, lamenting as did one poster at a popular rally that "*Imperiya nasha rushitsya*" ("Our empire is falling apart").

Thus Nina Andreyeva, the Leningrad teacher made famous by her attacks on *perestroika*, and the Christian mathematician and Academician Igor Shafarevich, agree at least on the point that it has been Russia and the Russians which have incurred the greatest losses in the development of the USSR's great power status. It was Russia that shouldered the burden for the defeat of fascism; it was Russia which lost the most young soldiers in Afghanistan.¹¹ This group is willing to accept that mistakes had been made in the past (although not, on the whole, by Russians), but they support the basic external and expansionist orientation of Soviet foreign policy. On this point the group finds common cause with those conservative elements within the country and the Party who fear that Gorbachev's foreign policy orientation will weaken the one area — the military — in which the USSR had enjoyed parity with the West. For this reason the views of this group are often published in Soviet military publications like *Krasnaya zvezda*.

The third trend appears amongst those xenophobic and isolationist Russian nationalists who want the USSR to withdraw from world affairs and who fear that Gorbachev's foreign and domestic policies are going to produce a "catastrophe" for the Russian nation. On the whole, the group is right-wing and anti-Bolshevik, seeing Marxism-Leninism as an alien ideology imposed by outsiders and resulting in the desecration of Russian culture and the devastation of the Russian countryside. This group is also anti-Western and anti-Gorbachev, seeing *perestroika* and *glasnost* as vehicles for the subversion of Russia by foreigners and Jews whose aim, according to one allegation, is to "legalize unemployment, prostitution, heavy metalists, rockers, hippies and the rest of the punks."¹² For them, Gorbachev's call for a "pluralism of views" is a call to dilute the purity of Russian culture with imported Western ideas. Their battle cry is that there can be no "pluralism of morality."¹³

8 *Le Nouvel Observateur*, May 8-14, 1987, p. 36.

9 Dmitriy Likhachev, "Beden ne tot, u kogo malo, a tot, komu malo," *Druzhba narodov*, No. 6, 1988, p. 224.

10 *Moscow News*, No. 38, September 25-October 2, 1988.

11 Nina Andreyeva's first letter, entitled "I Cannot Forsake Principles," appeared in *Sovetskaya Rossiya*, March 13, 1988. Igor Shafarevich's article, which was published along with a rebuttal by Roy Medvedev, appeared in *Moscow News*, No. 24, 1988.

12 I. Pavlov, "Letter in Response to Article by Boris Berman," *Moscow News*, No. 26, July 3-10, 1988.

13 Valentin Rasputin, the Russian nationalist writer, speaking at the Congress of Peoples' Deputies, Moscow Television Service, June 6, 1989, FBIS-SOV-89-108S, June 7, 1989, p. 24.

A not insignificant section of leading Russian writers and intellectuals would agree with the sentiment expressed by Yuriy Bondarev, a member of the board of the Russian Writers' Union, that Gorbachev's foreign economic policy will increase "the danger of our country being turned into a colony of multinational corporations."¹⁴ Speaking at the Congress of Peoples' Deputies, the writer Valentin Rasputin echoed these sentiments, calling on Gorbachev to jettison his attempts to secure foreign investment in Russian economic development, and charging that foreign participation in Soviet joint stock companies is "ruinous for the country and excessively destructive for nature, but probably profitable for foreign firms."¹⁵

Old tendencies and debates have thus come to the surface and clashed within the framework of a changed political environment and new political institutions to produce a qualitatively new political culture—one which has had a profound impact on the formulation of Soviet foreign policy. Two core issue areas, in particular, have been affected by the impact of this new political culture: Soviet self-image as a leader and role model for the international communist movement, and the legitimacy of the external use of force.

Soviet Self-Image

Whatever else separates the views of different strata and national groups, most agree that there is a deep crisis of socialism in the USSR. The situation has produced a crisis of confidence both in domestic and foreign affairs, with policy-makers and analysts alike questioning the very basis for the legitimacy of any Soviet claim to leadership of the world socialist system.

Attacks on this claim come from all sides. Writing in the journal of the Institute of World Economy and International Relations, one analyst pointedly remarked: "People have to live in the society called socialist. And if for the ordinary man living therein is worse than under capitalism, what is the point of it? But this is a question of what is socialism."¹⁶ The question "What is socialism?" was answered in the following, increasingly typical, way by the writer Chengis Aytmatov at the first meeting of the Congress of Peoples' Deputies:

While we were surmising, judging, and laying down the law as to what socialism must and cannot be, other people already have it, have built it, and are enjoying its fruits.... I have in mind such prosperous, law-based societies as Sweden,

Austria, Finland, Norway, the Netherlands, and finally Spain, Canada across the sea, not to mention Switzerland, which is a model... We can only dream about the social security and level of prosperity enjoyed by workers in those countries.... [T]hese countries do not call themselves socialist; however, they are none the worse for that.¹⁷

Flowing from this, the view is extremely widespread that the deformation of Soviet socialism has exhausted whatever attractiveness it had as a model for export. Thus *Izvestiya* commentator Aleksandr Bovin's analysis reflected prevailing sentiment when he wrote that foreign communist parties have so little political influence because of "the failures and difficulties along the road of developing real socialism [in the USSR], which, of course, have not attracted people to socialism but rather repelled them."¹⁸

If Not For the Defense of Socialism...

The tendency to see socialism as being in a state of crisis has had many repercussions, one of them being the questioning of previous decisions to send troops abroad. The use of force against Hungary in 1956, Czechoslovakia in 1968, and Afghanistan in 1979 were the three most notable cases of the massive deployment of Soviet force against the supposed threat of counterrevolution. The entire legitimacy of the so-called 'Brezhnev doctrine' rested on the notion that the use of force was not only a right, but a positive duty, when socialism was threatened in another state. But if the imposed brand of socialism was deformed, the ideological justification for the action evaporates.

The spirit behind the Brezhnev doctrine has been replaced by an anti-interventionist mood in both Soviet elite and popular circles. A poll conducted by the Scientific-Research Center of the Young Communist League (Komsomol) Higher School revealed that only six percent of the respondents approved of all forms of military aid, with 32 percent voicing a complete rejection of any type of military assistance.¹⁹

If Soviet accounts no longer adhere to the line that troops were introduced either "in the defense of socialism" or "to help a neighbor," what reasons are being generated to explain what after all have been major events in post-war Soviet foreign policy? Two explanations are dominant: one sees the fault lying in Soviet great power ambitions, the other in the essential repressiveness and secretiveness of the regime. Starting in early summer 1988, there have been widespread

14 Speech at a meeting of the secretariat of the board of the RSFSR Writers' Union, held in Ryazan, as reported in *Literaturnaya Rossiya*, No. 43, October 28, 1988, pp. 2-9. The fact that the meeting was apparently devoted to a concerted attack on Gorbachev's policies and that Ligachev also paid a visit to Ryazan turned the affair into a major political debate. The liberal journal *Ogonyok* censured the meeting (No. 52, 1988, pp. 13-15) and *Kommunist* published an unsigned editorial ("Old Myths and New Fears," No. 17, November 1988, pp. 23-26) criticizing this group in the harshest terms.

15 Moscow Television Service in Russian, June 6, 1989, FBIS-SOV-89-108S, pp. 22-23.

16 Nikolay Karagodin, "The Developing Countries: Economic Policy of the State and World Economic Relations," *Mirovaya ekonomika i mezhdunarodnyye otnosheniya* [henceforth referred to as *MEMO*], No. 11, November 1988, p. 59.

17 Moscow Television Service in Russian, June 2, 1989, FBIS-SOV-89-106S June 5, 1989, p. 13.

18 "On the Threshold of a New Century, Dialogue Between A. Ye. Bovin and V. P. Lukin," *MEMO*, No. 12, December 1987, p. 55.

19 *Moscow News*, No. 11, 1989.

The Harriman Institute Forum

analyses concluding that practically the entire history of post-war Soviet foreign policy was based on great power ambitions.²⁰

The interplay between external expansion and internal repression also has been a recurring theme. In writing about the lessons to be learned from the early period of Brezhnev's foreign policy, two analysts drew the connection between domestic and foreign policy most explicitly: "1968-69 saw the end of the 'transition' period and the triumph of the concept known in the West as the 'Brezhnev doctrine'. According to it, the diktat and monopoly on the truth were justified by the 'supreme interests' of socialism. Tvardovsky's *Novyi Mir* was gagged, Academician Sakharov was punished...."²¹

Just as foreign invasion and domestic suppression are being seen as integrally linked, so too analysts view attempts to reform socialism abroad as interacting with internal political struggles. It is for this reason that the changes in Eastern Europe are being so closely monitored in the USSR. As one analyst stated in writing about Poland when talks with Solidarity were just beginning: "Any serious failure of Polish renewal plays into the hands of [Soviet] conservative forces who won't fail to use it as a trump card against *perestroika*... each of Poland's major successes in overcoming the presently complicated 'stalemate' situation means success for the supporters of radical reform in our country, too, just as the favorable developments in the Soviet Union are the most reliable support and best political background for the efforts of our allies."²² This view, therefore, maintains that the only way to 'defend socialism' is the promotion of a new domestic political culture in the USSR which rejects the use of force.

The Consequences

The process of bringing Soviet foreign policy into line with new domestic circumstances has been gradual and uneven, with each of the various strands in the domestic tapestry vying to achieve prominence in influencing external behavior. The inability of conservative and Russian nationalist forces to launch a convincing counterattack against the erosion of their political authority at the highest level has limited their impact on current foreign policy. This limitation is mirrored in the dramatic collapse of the fortunes of conservative political forces in Eastern Europe. The continued and more widespread fear of German reunification within the USSR, however, could yet provide a rallying point for a right-wing challenge to Gorbachev. Gorbachev's own quick denunciation of prospects

for reunification, therefore, can also be seen as an attempt to prevent this issue from being co-opted by the right.

A second consequence of the change in domestic political culture is the marked disillusionment with previous high levels of military expenditure in general and with commitments of military and economic aid to the Third World in particular. A public opinion poll carried out in six Soviet cities in June 1989 revealed that of those respondents who did not answer "don't know," between sixty-two and eighty-two percent favored even greater cuts in defense expenditure than the fourteen percent cut announced by Gorbachev.²³ Another poll showed that only thirty-two percent of the respondents favored extending any economic aid to foreign countries.²⁴

This sentiment has been reflected at the highest level among elites who otherwise have very little in common. Thus, the poet Yevgeniy Yevtushenko drew applause at the Congress of Peoples' Deputies when he proposed "eliminating from the preamble to the Constitution the boastful ecstatic wording: A socialist society has been built in the USSR. First of all, it has to be built. With this in mind, the aid to underdeveloped countries should in some cases be cut, and in other cases stopped until such time as our own country becomes highly developed."²⁵

These views were shared by those Russian nationalists who on most other issues are in strident opposition to Yevtushenko. Thus, when Vasilii Belov, the extremely anti-Western and exceedingly popular novelist, poured scorn on the country's leadership for mismanaging the economy, he knew exactly which strings to pull: "Those who are now complaining about the harsh budget deficit should be asked: And why did it materialize? Is it not because there is a nineteen million strong administrative apparatus in the country? How much does it cost to maintain this apparatus? How much was the war in Afghanistan? How much do Cuba, Nicaragua, and Ethiopia cost? How expensive is space?... [The apparatus] wasted billions of rubles without sense, and no sense can be seen in the near future."²⁶

Concern about the impact of foreign spending on the country's economy was a theme also struck in the speech by the noted economist Nikolay Shmelyov. In addressing the urgent need to reduce the country's hard currency deficit, he put forward a three-point plan calling for "the reduction in the import of agricultural produce, the reduction in the import of heavy equipment, and cuts in our expenditure on international commitments."²⁷

All of this is in line with the views of Third World specialists themselves, who under the influence of 'new

20 The first major article was written by Vyacheslav Dashichev in *Literaturnaya gazeta*, No. 20, May 18, 1988. Aleksandr Bovin soon followed with a similar piece in *Moscow News*, No. 24, June 19-26, 1988.

21 Yuriy Levada and Viktor Sheinis, *Moscow News*, No. 46, November 20-27, 1988.

22 Marina Pavlova-Silvanskaya, *Moscow News*, No. 29, July 7, 1988.

23 *Izvestiya*, June 4, 1989.

24 According to a poll conducted by the Scientific-Research Center of the Komsomol Higher School and the Komsomol Central Committee, reported in *Moscow News*, No. 11, 1989.

25 Moscow Television Service, June 1, 1989, FBIS-SOV-89-105S, June 2, 1989, p. 15.

26 Speaking at the Congress of Peoples' Deputies, Moscow Television Service, June 1, 1989, FBIS-SOV-89-105S, June 2, 1989, p. 12.

27 Speech at the Congress of Peoples' Deputies, June 8, 1989, reported in *Pravda*, June 9, 1989.

thinking' have almost universally concluded that any Soviet effort in assisting underdeveloped countries to skip the capitalist phase and move directly to socialism is both doomed to failure and against basic Marxist tenets. Some go so far as to attribute the trend toward corrupt, personalized and authoritarian rule not only in the Third World, but also in Soviet Central Asia, precisely to the misguided belief that it was possible to skip stages of development. Thus, according to one prominent orientologist: "A picture of frightening proportions, of the distortions of the principles of socialism in our country, specifically in the national republics which had come to socialism having bypassed the capitalist phase of development, has been laid bare in the atmosphere of *glasnost*. These were primarily attempts to adapt surviving feudal and family-tribal relations and mentality to socialist realities." He went on to draw an explicit parallel with the Third World: "When studying the difficulties of socialist building in Asian states the reasons for the negative phenomena and reverse movements which are occurring in countries of a socialist orientation have come to be seen differently also." The reasons cited for these so-called negative phenomena include a mixture of indigenous economic, political, cultural, and religious factors, but also the fact that the Soviet Union is not sufficiently rich or developed to provide the enormous assistance to these regimes necessary in "accelerating the maturation of the prerequisites for the building of socialism in them."²⁸

This debate is intertwined with a separate, and quite fierce, polemic on anti-Semitism, anti-Zionism, and relations with Israel and the countries of the Middle East. Under the influence of *perestroika*, Soviet foreign policy has been reoriented away from its fierce anti-Israeli nature. Consular relations have been reestablished, many cultural and political delegations have been exchanged, Jewish emigration is at an all-time high, the USSR no longer always votes against Israel in the UN, and Gorbachev has officially put Moscow's Arab clients on notice that the USSR regards it as "unnatural" not to have relations with Israel. This official rejection of the anti-Zionist polemics which underlay Soviet Middle East policy in the 1970s has been countered by strong resistance from

a wave of resurgent anti-Semitism within Russian nationalist circles. Many of them see Gorbachev's opening to Israel as proof that he is under the control of a global Jewish-Masonic conspiracy. Pro-Palestinian rallies officially sanctioned by the local authorities in Moscow and Leningrad are being taken over by black-shirted supporters of Pamyat and the "Committee of Soviets against the restoration of diplomatic relations with Israel." They rail against the supposed Jewish control of the media and the network of spies they see Israel as having within the Gorbachev leadership.

The irony is that given the increased cynicism about Moscow's previous support for Third World national liberation movements and Third World socialist-oriented regimes, including those in the Arab world, this anti-Israeli sentiment has not been matched by any noticeable increase of public support for Moscow's Middle Eastern clients. On the contrary, even the previously most reliable allies of the Soviet Union — including the PLO and the ruling Syrian and Iraqi Ba'ath parties — are now being openly labelled as "bourgeois," "corrupt," "authoritarian," and generally devoid of any consistent adherence to anti-imperialist or socialist principles. In the polemic between those who would support and those who oppose an improvement of relations with Israel, there are virtually no advocates for the Arabs, both because of the anti-Third World trend and because the debate is seen as a fundamental extension of domestic politics.²⁹

What's Next?

Does this mean that the Soviets are going to pull out of the Third World and Eastern Europe, and cancel their commitments to the states with whom they have signed treaties of friendship and mutual assistance? This is hardly likely, since as Gorbachev himself has stated, "forces of the past and contradictions inherited from the past" still affect the formulation of foreign policy. He concluded that "we cannot renounce our army and say a farewell to arms. The same can be said of military alliances, the preservation of which depends

28 Aleksey Vasilyevich Kiva, "A Socialist Orientation: Theoretical Potential of the Concept and Practical Realities," *MEMO*, No. 11, November 1988, pp. 62-63. Among the many interesting articles reflecting this new tendency, one would have to include G. Mirskiy, "The Emergent States: Development Paths," *Aziya i Afrika segodnya*, No. 3, 1987; G. Mirskiy, "On the Question of Choice of Path and Orientation of the Developing Countries," *MEMO*, No. 5, 1987; V.L. Sheynis, "The Developing Countries and the New Political Thinking," *Rabochiy klass in sovremennyy mir*, No. 4, 1987; V. Li and G. Mirskiy, "The Socialist Orientation in the Light of the New Political Thinking," *Aziya i Afrika segodnya*, No. 8, 1987; Yu. Aleksandrov, V. Maksimenko, "Once More About the Problem of a Socialist Orientation," *ibid.*, No. 10, 1987; N. Simoniya, "Lenin's Concept of the Transition to Socialism and Countries of the East," *ibid.*, No. 4, 1988; A. Kaufman, R. Ulyanovskiy, "On the Question of the Socialist Orientation of Emergent Countries," *ibid.*, No. 5, 1988; N. Simoniya, "Conducting Scholarly Debate Honestly!" *ibid.*, No. 6, 1988; I. Zevelev, A. Kara-Murza, "The Afro-Asian World: Contradictions of Social Progress," *ibid.*, No. 7, 1988; Yu. Ivanov, "Certain Questions of Noncapitalist Development," *ibid.*, No. 8, 1988; V. Maksimenko, "Lenin's Political Testament and Certain Problems of a Socialist Orientation," *ibid.*, No. 9, 1988; G. Mirskiy, "The Socialist Orientation in the 'Third World'," *Rabochiy Klass i sovremennyy mir*, No. 4, 1988; N.A. Karagodin, "The Developing Countries: Economic Policy of the State and World-Economic Relations," *MEMO*, No. 11, 1988; and N. Simoniya, *Pravda*, January 18, 1989.

29 See, for example, G. Mirskiy's attack on Arab politics in "Light and Shade of Our 'Third World Studies'," *MEMO*, No. 11, November 1988, pp. 134-137; S. Rogov and V. Nosenko's attack on domestic anti-Semitism in *Sovetskaya kul'tura*, February 9, 1989; the articles on Pamyat in *Moscow News*, No. 13, April 2-9, 1989 and no. 21, May 28-June 4, 1989.

The Harriman Institute Forum

not on us alone." However, as Gorbachev made clear, past commitments must not block the emergence of new approaches, as occurred when the Soviet leadership pulled its troops out of Afghanistan and started to withdraw its forces from Eastern Europe.³⁰

What is clear is that reliance on military solutions is not going to be supported by the population. Elites and key analytical circles are aware that such a policy in itself has not produced results and has moreover placed an inordinate burden upon the public. A backlash against defense expenditures was inevitable, and it came as little surprise that in a poll of one hundred of the top Soviet diplomats, analysts, scientists and public figures, fully forty-six percent stated that the USSR has "no need to have as many arms as the USA" and seventy-three percent believed that "a scrupulous maintenance of parity between the USSR and the USA is meaningless."³¹

Such a view has gradually come to be shared by the Soviet military, whose prestige and funding have both declined as a result of the new mood. While continued high defense spending is not without its advocates in military and political circles, the 'new thinking' within the military gradually has come to accept the inevitability of reduced funding, and many are seeking to achieve these reductions through cuts in the size of the armed forces, the withdrawal of troops from abroad, and a reduction in arms transfers, which are increasingly seen as unprofitable.³²

In no country is there a perfect correlation between popular concerns and the foreign policy pursued by the state. In most states political culture is fragmented and diverse, with the ability of any group to influence foreign policy depending less on the pluralism of the society than on the power of the group. The Soviet case is now no different, but this is in marked contrast to previous decades when popular wishes and

concerns were flagrantly violated in favor of promoting the narrow interests of a small ruling elite.

Gorbachev needs to take into account major domestic constituencies whose newfound power is derived from the very reforms he himself has promoted. Yet many of these groups would pursue policies far removed from the liberal principles inherent in 'new political thinking'. The inter-ethnic, class, and social upheavals which have become part of daily Soviet life will not be easily separated from foreign policy. And while reductions in military spending and a diminution in Third World commitments would be consistent with both elite and popular expectations, many other aspects of the 'new political culture' may produce a far less reliable or dependable international partner than is hoped for in the West. Strong anti-Western and isolationist sentiments seek to balance Gorbachev's own attempts to transform the nature of Soviet power.

If political acumen and popular support are anything to go by, then Gorbachev will surely win this ultimate battle, too. But if Russian history is a guide, then the outcome is not so predictable.

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30 Gorbachev's report to the Congress of Peoples' Deputies, Moscow Television Service, May 30, 1989, FBIS-SOV-89-103S, May 31, 1989, p. 59.

31 *Moscow News*, No. 32, 1988.

32 The unprofitability of Soviet arms transfers was first discussed by Petr Litavrin, "The Issue of Arms Trade Limitation," *SShA*, No. 1, January 1989, p. 18, when he stated that "the foreign currency revenues derived from these shipments now appear increasingly dubious: The serious economic problems of several of the countries engaged in military-technical collaboration with the USSR and their participation in regional conflicts are increasing their debts, and the prospects for repayment are extremely uncertain." The chairman of the Supreme Soviet Committee on Defense and State Security Questions also revealed that on the very first day of its deliberations in October, the committee had discussed, in closed session, the "question of military shipments" (*Krasnaya zvezda*, October 6, 1989).